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WordsUncaged Submission

(Essay)

“Racism”

Webster’s defines *racism* as follows: “A belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race.”

I was born into a very mixed family, meaning, my father married my mother after she already had five children by two different men and my father also previously had four children. My father’s children and family lived back east in Arkansas, while my mother and siblings here grew up in California, specifically a very white Napa Valley. My grandparents on both sides used the N-word as if it were a household word and referred to it whenever talking about African-American people. My mother didn’t like using the word but in fact she did occasionally use it without thought. I was never taught specifically to be racist, but I was never taught to treat African-American’s equally either.

My father’s side of the family was much worse when it came to the subject of racism and black folk. I didn’t visit them much but I did enough to tell they were steeped in it traditionally. As a young child and into my mid-teens, I found myself as a racially motivated person. I spoke and thought the same way as my family did. Although the city I grew up in was mostly white, there was a few black kids around.

When I was around sixteen years old, I met a black kid in my town by the name of Joe Lamb. My first thoughts were to treat him as the lower type of human being that some of my family would have. Before I could, a few of my friends pulled me aside and said, “No, Joe’s cool, man; leave him alone.” So, I decided to hold off any racial slurs or any other racially provoked ideas I may have had at the time.

Well, it turned out that Joe was indeed cool and funny and one of the nicest guys I had ever met. Joe was a skateboarder and he fit very well into our circle of friends. So, it was through that firsthand experience that I decided to change my beliefs and I no longer viewed black folk as anything lower than any other race or people. I wish I could say that I changed all of my bad

behavior at that time, but I did not. So, thanks be to God for Joe Lamb and a few white friends that taught me it's not OK to be racially prejudice.

I've since heard rumors from my father's side of the family that our ancestors were slave owners and some may have even been involved with the Klu Klux Klan. I am NOT proud of that part of my heritage in any way. I personally don't feel guilty for being a part of any of that because that was way before my time, but I do have a certain disdain for my heritage because of the choices and actions of those ancestors. To the contrary, I have had the privilege and opportunity of changing the tide in my family with my daughter, Amanda. She doesn't have a racially prejudice bone in her body and neither will her two children. I made sure to show my daughter that people should not be defined by the color of their skin or their ethnic background, and that in the good ol' U.S. of A. we are all equal, we are all made by the same creator and have the same beginning. I am proud to pass that torch onto her.

Unfortunately, we still live in a largely racist society. The way I see it is, most people who say they are not racist, in fact hold tightly to racist beliefs. Many of those people don't even realize it, though. Many white folks these days think that the discrimination of blacks is over. They fail to see the trickle-down effect of the Jim Crow era. Racism has plagued this country from its very roots and has been ingrained into the fabric of our society and, sadly, it's not likely going to change any time soon. There is no simple solution, or is there?

I truly believe that there is no secular solution. The only true solution to this unfortunate realism is God Himself. Racism's roots are in hatred and hate is 100% a sin issue. Without repentance and the forgiveness of Jesus Christ, there is no hope for any remedy of racism. It's no secret that Black America still suffers a remnant of persecution from the slavery days. From the vagrancy laws of the mid-19th century, to the tough on crime legislation in the 20th, and well into the next millennium, black men and women have been targeted and discriminated against and treated unfairly, it's like a stain that won't come out of a shirt; you can still see it. I'm perfectly aware that not many white people see things the way I do, especially here in prison, but I'm OK with that. We need more white people to speak up in this country in support of black people, because no one seems to be listening to the black folks. All people need to realize there is a reason for Black Lives Matter. There's a reason for the protests that go on every time another black man is shot down with no gun or weapon or running away from the police. There's a reason why our prison system is clogged up with black men and it's not because black folks are so bad of a people, it's because white

America won't speak up and step up to the plate for black America. If we are going to be called the UNITED States of America then we need to be UNITED.

So, I can genuinely say I am proud to be a father, and I'm proud to be a Christian, and I'm proud to be an American, but am I proud to be a white man in this country? No, not particularly!